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ABSTRACT

Curriculum planning can be improved by obtaining a clearer insight into the specific needs and interests of young people. Studies using the critical incident technique were made of the education and subsequent careers of a representative national sample of individuals. The purpose was to assess the quality of life of individuals in three age groups of 30-, 50-, and 70-year-olds. Findings indicated that the majority of adults in America feel their needs and wants are well met in the areas most important to their quality of life. However, many individuals indicated their quality of life could have been substantially bettered by improvements in their educational programs. The report also contains highlights of studies by 10 leaders in education of the lives of some of the 30-year-olds. A summary is given of eight problems involved in improving American education, followed by a 5-point program for specific improvements. (Author/LD)

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Quality of Life of Adults in America: Implications for Curriculum Planners

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Many leaders in curriculum planning have stated that they wish to use the needs and interests of students as the criteria for designing and evaluating educational programs. Such an approach requires a clear identification and understanding of the needs and interests of students. Many efforts to develop curriculum plans have been based on only broad general impressions of the nature of the individual needs and interests of young people.

To obtain a clearer insight into the basic motivations of young people and their specific needs and interests, intensive studies of the education and subsequent careers of a representative national sample of individuals with known backgrounds, abilities, interests, and preferences were made. By pooling the findings from such in-depth studies of a large number of persons, much more can be learned than by merely collecting averages with respect to some of the important characteristics of the group as a whole. It is the fulfillment of his or her values, preferences, abilities, and needs that determines the overall well-being or quality of life of a person.

To assess the quality of life of each individual, it is essential to have a sound definition and description of the components that contribute to an individual's quality of life. The critical incident technique was used to define such a set of components on an empirical basis. More than 6,500 critical incidents were collected from about 2,800 people. These people included representatives from rural Mississippi, Black Harlem, Spanish Harlem, Miami Beach, Orange County California, Berkeley, and San Francisco's Chinatown. The sample also contained incidents from such diverse groups as Iowa farmers, rural Pennsylvanians, Salt Lake City residents, and many other distinctive types from various parts of the country.

With each of these groups several questions were used to collect critical incidents. Typical questions were "Think of the last time you did something that was very important to you or had an experience that was especially

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satisfying to you." After giving a specific incident, the people were asked what exactly happened or what did they do and why was this important to them. Another question was, "Think of a time you saw something happen to another person that was harmful or made their life worse in some way."

The 15 components developed from the critical incidents are grouped under five main headings: Physical and Material Well-Being; Relations with Other People; Social, Community, and Civic Activities; Personal Development and Fulfillment; and Recreation. The components are listed in Table 1.

Using these 15 quality of life dimensions, three- to four-hour interviews were developed for three age groups, 30-, 50-, and 70-year-olds. These included their educational experiences; their health histories; their work histories; their financial affairs; their family situation; their personal development and fulfillment; their social and civic activities; and their leisure time and recreational activities.

Three samples of 1,000 persons each were selected to be nationally representative of all 30-year-olds, 50-year-olds, and 70-year-olds. The persons in these three groups were interviewed to determine their present quality of life and, in so far as possible, the contributions and missed opportunities in their educational experiences. The 30-year-old sample was selected from among the 400,000 students included in the national survey in 1960 known as Project TALENT. They were all 15 years old when they took part in completing the two days of tests and questionnaires that were included in Project TALENT.

A summary of the reports of each of these three samples of adults, with respect to the importance they assigned to each of the 15 factors determining quality of life and the extent to which their needs were met, is shown in Table 1. These findings indicate that the large majority of adults in America feel their needs and wants are well met in the areas most important to their quality of life. In answer to a separate question, only 15% of the 50- and 70-year-olds reported that their overall quality of life was only "fair" or "poor."

Table 1

Percentages of a Sample of 1000 30-year-olds, 600 50-year-olds, and 600 70-year-olds Reporting Each of the 15 Components as Important or Very Important to Their Quality of Life * and *Percentages (in parens) of the Same Sample Reporting Their Needs as Well Met or Very Well Met for Each Component* **

Component	Male			Female		
	30 yrs	50 yrs	70 yrs	30 yrs	50 yrs	70 yrs
PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL WELL-BEING						
A. Material comforts--things like a desirable home, good food, possessions, conveniences, an increasing income, and security for the future.	80 (74)	85 (73)	87 (75)	75 (76)	86 (69)	87 (74)
B. Health and personal safety--to be physically fit and vigorous, to be free from anxiety and distress, and to avoid bodily harm.	98 (86)	96 (84)	95 (85)	98 (86)	98 (81)	96 (80)
RELATIONS WITH OTHER PEOPLE						
C. Relationships with your parents, brothers, sisters, and other relatives--things like communicating, visiting, understanding, doing things, and helping and being helped by them.	68 (81)	63 (72)	60 (74)	83 (81)	76 (72)	78 (70)
D. Having and raising children--this involves being a parent and helping, teaching, and caring for your children.	84 (80)	85 (86)	83 (80)	93 (83)	92 (86)	88 (84)
E. Close relationship with a husband/wife/a person of the opposite sex.	90 (84)	88 (80)	85 (88)	94 (81)	83 (71)	46 (70)
F. Close friends--sharing activities, interests, and views; being accepted, visiting, giving and receiving help, love, trust, support, guidance.	71 (81)	76 (82)	70 (78)	79 (82)	80 (78)	87 (77)
SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, AND CIVIC ACTIVITIES						
G. Helping and encouraging others--this includes adults or children other than relatives or close friends. These can be your own efforts or efforts as a member of some church, club, or volunteer group.	60 (61)	71 (72)	64 (71)	71 (62)	74 (73)	78 (75)
H. Participation in activities relating to local and national government and public affairs.	47 (54)	62 (63)	64 (63)	42 (54)	58 (64)	58 (62)
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FULFILLMENT						
I. Learning, attending school, improving your understanding, or getting additional knowledge.	87 (58)	68 (66)	50 (75)	81 (50)	67 (57)	60 (64)
J. Understanding yourself and knowing your assets and limitations, knowing what life is all about and making decisions on major li' activities. For some people, this includes religious or spiritual experiences. For others, it is an attitude toward life or a philosophy.	84 (74)	84 (77)	80 (75)	92 (71)	90 (77)	88 (81)
K. Work in a job or at home that was interesting, rewarding, worthwhile.	91 (79)	90 (77)	55 (75)	89 (79)	85 (68)	59 (79)
L. Expressing yourself in a creative manner in music, art, writing, photography, practical activities, or in leisure time activities.	48 (60)	39 (69)	36 (73)	53 (57)	54 (69)	58 (72)
RECREATION						
M. Socializing--meeting other people, doing things with them, and giving or attending parties.	48 (73)	47 (73)	49 (72)	53 (74)	49 (69)	60 (73)
N. Reading, listening to music, or observing sporting events or entertainment.	56 (71)	45 (73)	52 (81)	53 (70)	56 (75)	63 (80)
O. Participation in active recreation--such as sports, traveling and sightseeing, playing games or cards, singing, dancing, playing an instrument, acting, and other such activities.	59 (64)	48 (59)	47 (63)	50 (63)	52 (62)	52 (67)

* "At this time in your life, how important to you is _____?"

** *For 50- and 70-year-olds, the question read "How well are your needs and wants being met in this regard?"*

For the 30-year-olds, the question read "How satisfied are you with your status in this respect?"

Although it is reassuring to find that the overall quality of life of adults is generally quite good, there are many specific individuals whose quality of life could have been substantially bettered by improvements in their educational programs.

To provide a variety of insights and perspectives on possible improvements in the educational experiences of young adults, each member of a panel of 10 leaders in education was asked to study one of 10 sets of 100 lives of persons in the sample of 1,000 30-year-olds. These educational experts then wrote papers that are the separate chapters in a book to be published this spring. A few of the highlights from these chapters are briefly reported here.

Ralph W. Tyler is well known to this group as a leading authority on curriculum development. His chapter reviews the origins and changes made in the high school curriculum in recent decades. Dr. Tyler writes, "Generally, these young adults looked back upon their studies and reported that few stimulated their interests and helped them acquire knowledge and skills that have been vital in their lives." "If a school subject is to become a real resource for young people, the content should include such things as concepts, principles, skills, and works of art that can attract the active interest and effort of the students."

Based on a study of these lives, Dr. Tyler makes five recommendations:

(1) The curriculum should be revised by selecting the content for each instructional field that can provide the students now, and probably in the future, with the significant resources that they can employ to help them achieve their purposes, deal with their problems, and gain greater meaning and satisfaction from their lives.

(2) The teachers and the instructional materials should provide illustrations in the initial period of the course, as well as throughout, of the relevance of the course content to the activities and concerns of the students.

(3) The teachers and the instructional materials should make clear to the students what the objectives of the course are and, specifically, what they can expect to be able to do with their new knowledge and skills that they could not do before.

(4) The educational program should provide many opportunities to practice outside of school at home, in the peer group, in civic-community affairs, in political activities, in consumer situations, in recreational activities, and in the maintenance of health what is learned in the classroom.

(5) The students should be tested and graded on the objectives of the course that have lasting value for the students. Tests should reduce the emphasis on recall of information and simple skills but should require that the student be able to supply explanations and new ideas, to think clearly, to make judgments, and to show understanding and appreciation.

Michael Scriven, currently Director of the Evaluation Institute and a professor at the University of San Francisco, is now serving as President of the American Educational Research Association. His chapter on "Values and the Cognitive Curriculum" points very clearly to some of the serious shortcomings in the present curriculum. He writes, "What I propose to attempt is the identification of one or two areas where we can be extremely confident both that the school did not do what it should and that the change would have had significant results." Probably the most important deficiency Scriven points out is the need for systematic attention to developing skills in critical thinking. He suggests the schools use specific examples from ethics, politics, values, and life-management problems. He also illustrates and emphasizes the importance of consciousness-raising by giving people the basic knowledge and understanding required to be rationale citizens.

Robert M. Gagné, currently Professor of Educational Research at Florida State University, is one of the country's leading authorities on learning and

instruction and has authored several books in these fields. His chapter analyzes the contribution of secondary education with respect to four centrally important and widely recognized goals. One of these goals is preparation for work. Most of these 30-year-olds report that they are satisfied with the jobs they are in. They want work they feel they are able to do well, that offers opportunity for advancement, and has competent supervisors. Most feel their present jobs provide these. Most of the young people feel, however, that the direct contribution of their high school courses to their present job skills and abilities was small.

Dr. Gagné concludes that the effects of the general education received in high school by these individuals were obscure and limited. He writes, "These trends definitely point in the direction of encouraging the learning of skills of increased usefulness to living for the high school graduate." He suggests that educational improvement may best be sought by undertaking a radical reformation of secondary education.

Leona E. Tyler, an Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Oregon, has written several books on the topics of individual differences, counseling, and motivation. Her chapter concludes that both the compulsory aspect of education and the lack of opportunities for students to choose and plan their educational programs create a negative atmosphere in high school that tends to make the present programs ineffective. She finds the programs deficient in preparing students for careers, for leisure time activities, and for constructive citizenship. The study of these lives does not suggest that the system can be patched up by improving guidance services. The present system must be transformed into one that would stimulate choice, planning, and individual responsibility. Dr. Tyler writes, "Two situations that look identical can be very different psychologically if the participants in one have chosen to be there and the participants in the other are there through no wish of their own."

In redesigning secondary education, she proposes that students be given the responsibility for making choices, planning their education, and learning

the things required to fulfill their choices and plans. One suggestion offered for accomplishing this change is to set up a comprehensive youth program in each community. This program would provide opportunities to achieve a variety of competencies based on the individual's interests. Some of these would involve working in local shops, factories, or other organizations.

Edmund W. Gordon, currently serving as Chairman of the Department of Guidance at Columbia University's Teachers College, has written extensively about child development, compensatory education, urban and minority problems, and guidance. His chapter examines the implications of these young people's lives for needed changes in guidance services. Some of the explicit and implicit needs discussed in addition to the need for improved guidance services include: better quality teachers; more effective individualization of instruction; more appropriate curricula; more flexibility in awarding credits for learning experiences; better services for students with special problems; helping students gain maturity; assisting students to explore possible interests; preparing students to use leisure time effectively; and developing a personal sense of responsibility.

The basic defect of present guidance programs is described as their focus on remedial rather than on developmental functions. The primary concept of guidance is to give young people such as these an opportunity for an individually planned and optimally facilitated program of development within their own environmental setting.

Sarane Spence Boocock, Professor of Sociology and Chairperson of the Sociology Department at Rutgers University, has conducted research on the sociology of learning and life course transitions in family life. Her chapter discusses the life course transitions and implications of the analyses of these people's lives for education using average ages. The average male completed his last year of formal education at age 20.3. There was a very large amount of variation in the group of 500 males. The females completed their last year of education about one and a half years earlier. Both groups

started their first full-time job at age 19.0. The first marriage for the men was at age 22.0 and the birth of the first child at age 23.4. At these transition points, the women were a little more than two years younger. When the average ages for these transitions are examined for various ability and socioeconomic levels, it is found that the age at leaving school shows the greatest variation. The high ability and socioeconomic groups making this transition much later than the lower groups. There is a greater age difference between high and low groups on these two variables for males than females.

With respect to educational implications the chapter suggests the possibility of more systematic work-study programs and new curriculum materials to inform students about marriage, parenthood, and possible adult life styles. Such information might provide for better informed decisions on transitions, possibly reversing the observed trend toward compression of these points.

Gene V. Glass, Director of the Laboratory of Educational Research at the University of Colorado in Boulder, has done recent research on educational measurement and evaluation, psychotherapy, and law and social change. His chapter summarizes the many emotional and interpersonal conflicts that are evident in the lives of these young people and their parents. The fact that about one in three of these 30-year-olds is divorced or separated or had parents who were divorced or separated is cited as emphasizing the need for effective courses and counseling in the schools. The very large proportion who report episodes of serious depression or other significant psychoneurotic symptoms is also noted as indicating the need for such programs.

Dr. Glass concludes that the present staff could not supply and the parents would not allow these programs at the present time. He hopes that as the extent of the problem is documented we can hope for public acceptance of mental health goals.

Wayne H. Holtzman, President of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

and Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Texas, has completed a number of cross-cultural studies and has authored books and articles on personality psychology and educational psychology. His chapter points out the very close relation between score on the English test at age 15 and amount of education completed. The mean scores on the Reading Comprehension test at age 15 are substantially higher for those entering the three career groups requiring a substantial amount of education (Engineering, Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Architecture; Medical and Biological Sciences; and Humanities, Law, and Social and Behavioral Sciences) than for those entering the three career groups requiring little academic education (Mechanics and Industrial Trades; Construction Trades; and General Labor and Public and Community Service).

The main section of this chapter discusses the problems of the young people who did not get effective help in the five major areas in which schools could have aided them. These included: (1) selecting a career and preparing for it; (2) assisting with individual learning needs; (3) general quality of teaching; (4) appropriate curriculum; and (5) personal support and counseling. It is urged that educational reforms to correct these clearly demonstrated deficiencies be initiated.

Wendell H. Pierce, recently retired from his position as Executive Director at the Education Commission of the States, has spent many years dealing with the problems of public education and has written extensively about these problems. In his chapter, Dr. Pierce suggests that ideas for change in education can come from the top, bottom, or the middle. No one agency, institution, or group has a monopoly on talent and insight. He states that any school system can produce ideas that lead to improvement. Practitioners may not be involved in the development of research, but they must be involved in making research results relevant to their conditions and needs. Research, professional interests groups, the media, parents, students, all are part of the cooperative process by which education policy is made. Change is essential to our way of life, but we must work together at it.

A careful study of the educational experiences and subsequent lives of this group of 1,000 30-year-olds and the insights of the panel of experts reveal several implications for curriculum planners. In the concluding section of the book on improving American education, eight problems and deficiencies are discussed. This discussion is followed by a 5-point program for specific improvements. The eight major problems and deficiencies are briefly summarized here.

1. Failure to learn the basic skills in the primary grades. In response to the question "Did you have any difficulty with reading, writing, arithmetic or speech?" more than half of these young people said "Yes." An example from one of these 1,000 30-year-olds will illustrate this problem of neglect of student needs for special help. Henry was a black student in the northeast section of the country. Partly because of a lisp that made him nervous when reading aloud, Henry developed an emotional block towards reading. His teachers were unsympathetic and he was moved along from grade to grade without ever learning the fundamental reading skills. He was 15 years old and in the 8th grade when he participated in the Project TALENT testing. His reading and vocabulary scores were in the bottom five percent but his scores on the two tests not requiring reading, Abstract Reasoning and Visualization in Three Dimensions, were quite high. A junior high school teacher took an interest in Henry and helped him after school so that he finally became motivated and learned to read. It took him some time to develop his abilities and knowledge, but he improved as he went through high school. After working a few years following graduation, he obtained an educational opportunity scholarship and completed a bachelor's degree in political science. Unfortunately, many others who got off to a bad start in the early grades have not been able to make such a recovery.

2. Failure to develop appropriate patterns of personal and social behavior in the primary and intermediate grades. The girls, especially, indicated they had problems in this area. Thirty percent of them stated that they needed help in personal and social development and did not get it. Ann, a white, had very high ability. However, one of her teachers was "a great humiliator

and a real put-down artist." Ann remembers crying when she was in the 2nd grade because she hated school so much. After some periods of doubt and indecision, including dropping out of college to work as a clerk, waitress, and secretary, she eventually finished her degree. At age 30, Ann was a teacher and director of a private school for 3- to 5-year-olds.

3. Failure to learn about one's interests and abilities and how they relate to participation in educational, social, political, and commercial institutions and organization. This was one of the most frequent deficiencies that the reviewers noted for these 30-year-olds. George, a white, had ability scores a little above average in Mathematics, about average in Mechanical Reasoning and the tests not requiring reading, and a little below average on the tests of verbal ability. George has been trying hard to find a suitable career and has taken courses in a community college. He has completed two part-time training programs. One lasted two years and the other three years. Today, George is working in a job unrelated to any of these training courses. Referring to his time in school, he now says, "I really didn't know what I wanted to do and I'm still not sure I do either."

4. Failure to develop the skills necessary for critical thinking with respect to specific situations involving ethics, politics, values, and life management problems. The experience of Shirley, a white, illustrates the problem. Her abilities were a little better than average but she quit school in the middle of the 11th grade. She reports her first child was illegitimate. She would like to know more about government and politics but says she does not vote because she doesn't understand the issues.

5. Failure to develop personal life and career goals, and plans for achieving them. The information and skills mentioned in the previous two problems are essential to developing goals and plans. A study of these 1,000 lives clearly shows that the young people who developed goals and plans in their high school years now report a better quality of life than those lacking such plans. Joe, a white, illustrates this need for goals and plans based on both full information and sophisticated decision making. Joe had an interest

in engineering-type activities when he participated in Project TALENT. He also had the kinds of abilities that would have made it possible to do very well in an engineering course in college. However, after graduating from high school, he joined the navy instead of going to college. He expects to retire in a few years at age 38 after 20 years of service. He has no plans for this mid-career transition and is unlikely to find something that will make adequate use of his interests, abilities, and experience.

6. Failure to assist students in achieving self-understanding and maturity, including a clear set of values and the acceptance of personal responsibility for their lives. These 30-year-olds reported that developing self-understanding and maturity was one of the major determiners of their present quality of life. Unfortunately, 30 percent of them also reported that they were no more than "moderately satisfied" with their present development in this respect. John provides an example of this failure to develop maturity in high school. He was a black from the south-central part of the country. After graduating from high school, he worked for a short period and then entered a vocational school to study TV repair. He spent four years in this school. When he left the school at age 24, he joined the army. He now reports his two years in the army were a period of major change for him. He says, "I became more mature and found out who I really was and what I was capable of." His experience is fairly typical of those reported by many young men who say they did not mature and understand themselves until they served in the military. Clearly the schools must do a better job in this area.

7. Failure to assist students in learning the basic principles and facts concerning health care, marriage, parenthood, participation in local and national government, and leisure time activities. These young people reported they studied many things in high school that were of no value to them but they learned little about these very important practical and life-management skills and information. It was judged that more than three-fourths of them would have benefited in important ways by having studied different materials in high school. Mary, a white, is one of the many young people strongly urging that

the curriculum be changed. She reports, "I feel high school wasted my time on learning things I'll never use . . . . It was not that interesting. Everyday living--simple things--loans, homes, etc.—that's what they should teach." She also said schools should help "prepare people for parenthood." Certainly it is time that some of the 19th century classical courses be replaced by more practical courses essential for effective living.

8. Failure to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to enter a career or enter an institution in which they can complete their preparation for a career. Among the earlier deficiencies mentioned was the student's lack of information about himself or herself with respect to available careers, decision-making skills, and goals and plans. In addition to correcting this, the school must provide opportunities to prepare for a career. Dan, a young white, graduated from a general course in high school unprepared and without direction. He floundered through a series of unskilled jobs, joined the army reserves and spent six months on active duty. He then got a job as an auto mechanic. He is dissatisfied with his present job since it does not make use of his best abilities and is not along the lines of his interests. He is hoping to change but still is uncertain of what he wants to do.

Using the unique perspective provided by the young people in this study, an attempt has been made to outline some of the steps that might lead to significant improvements in education. Five suggested steps are described below:

1. Install a personalized education program in grades 1 through 12. The main purpose of this step is to provide each student with materials of types in which he or she has shown an interest and for which the student's specific goals and plans show a need. The materials should be at the correct difficulty level so that each student can learn continuously and efficiently. It is expected that such a personalized education program would increase motivation to learn by giving the student greater responsibility for his or her own educational development.

2. Install a life and career guidance program in grades 1 through 12. The type of personalized education program described in the first step requires that each student have goals and plans. The life and career guidance program would assist each student in exploring and assessing his or her values, interests, and potential abilities. These would be studied in relation to the requirements for various broad types of life and career opportunities. The student would then be taught how to make the necessary decisions and choices that would result in selecting goals and developing plans.

3. Install a course required of all students on life management skills. This course would include the fundamentals of health care, consumer skills, financial management, citizenship activities, marriage, and parenthood. It would emphasize applications suited to the individual's interests and plans and would use the resources of the community to as great an extent as possible. The course would aim at developing judgment and decision-making ability rather than merely supplying information and developing simple skills.

4. Install a personal and social development program in grades 1 through 12. This program would involve a systematic effort to identify student behavior patterns which indicate personal and social adjustment problems. Through teachers or specialists, it would also provide necessary assistance enabling students to understand specific personal problems in a way that will decrease their detrimental effects on behavior.

5. Install educational and career preparation courses in grades 7 through 12. This involves the implementation of the goals and plans developed in Step 2. There would need to be some tabulating and monitoring of the students' goals and plans to ensure that appropriate courses were available and that the students requiring them were enrolled.

The implementation of the programs described above would not involve major changes or increases in expenses. The availability of these programs would produce very substantial improvements in both the amount and appropriate-

ness of student learning. It could be expected to result in a major overall increase in the quality of life of these young people. Let us hope that today's leaders in education can ensure that tomorrow's students will benefit from yesterday's experience.